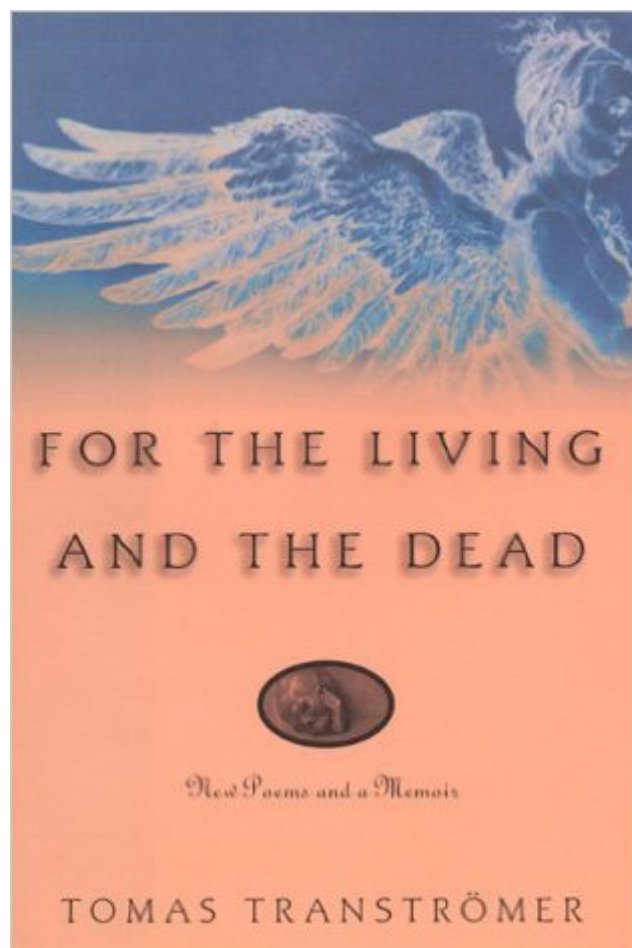


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For The Living And The Dead



Synopsis

With this new volume of poetry, Tomas Tranströmer once again demonstrates his gift for capturing and grounding the elusive, luminous details of our modern world. As its title suggests, *For the Living and the Dead* works to bridge the space between those real and unreal elements of life, suggesting that a surprising, redemptive cohesion can exist within a universe of opposing forces. Tranströmer has referred to his poems as "meeting places," with "their intent to make a sudden connection between aspects of reality that conventional languages and outlooks ordinarily keep apart. Large and small details of the landscape meet, divided cultures and people flow together in a work of art. . . ." People and objects alike are given a certain weightiness, their presence filled with a potential carefully measured by the poet's eye and quietly attested to by his language. In "Vermeer," "The airy sky has taken its place leaning against the wall. /It is like a prayer to what is empty./ And what is empty turns its face to us/ and whispers/ 'I am not empty, I am open.'" This volume combines Tranströmer's recent poetry with a prose memoir of his childhood in Sweden, written in the same careful, unsentimental voice for which he is so beloved. Through this memoir the author reveals himself as a curious, sensitive child, interested in archeology and insects, terrified of school and his authoritarian teachers. Characterized by the insight and integrity we have come to expect from his work, *For the Living and the Dead* confirms Tomas Tranströmer as one of the most significant living poets writing in any language.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Thomas Transtomer the 2011 Nobel Prize winner is highly esteemed by the world's poetic elite. A number of distinguished poets make translations of his work in this volume. Transtomer is a poet's poet who is admired for his metaphorical brilliance and technical skill. This admiration may well be justified. But as a reader coming to these texts I often found myself searching for some defining situation or context to make them understandable. Such a context was present in what for me was the most interesting part of the volume his memoir of childhood. He was an only child whose father left the family when he was very young. His maternal grandfather was a strong and stabilizing presence. He in one interesting story tells of how he as a very small child was swept away by a crowd and lost connection with his mother. He figured out the path home by walking back the way of the tramway line. His resourcefulness in dealing with a dangerous and terrifying situation seems to also somehow mark his poetry. He tells of other incidents which are difficult including one in which he is beaten by a schoolteacher. He also speaks about a close friend of his who died young, and whose absence he laments. I found the memoir interesting at times but not in an overwhelming way. There is no great expression of human feeling and relationship. This too seems to me missing in the poetry. But again I would not rely one-hundred percent on my review or judgment here.

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